

#5883

AKIN GUMP
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April 6, 2009

Mr. Jeffrey Gilday
Registration Unit
Department of Justice
Public Office-9th Floor
1400 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Gilday:

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Sincerely,



Melissa L. Laurenza

Laurenza, Melissa

From: Noam Neusner [noam@neusner.com]
Sent: Friday, April 03, 2009 4:36 PM
To: Noam Neusner
Subject: Turkey, Israel, and the US: A busy period, with great promise
Attachments: image001.gif

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Second, Turkey and Israel will be holding joint naval exercises this summer. This proves the underlying strength of that long-standing strategic relationship.

Third, Turkey and Armenia are reportedly at an advanced stage in the process of normalizing their relations. Should these two nations reach an agreement, this would represent a significant and historic achievement. The terms of that normalization would cover a range of issues, including borders, security, trade, energy, and historical commissions.

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APRIL 1, 2009, 6:13 P.M. ET

By MARC CHAMPION <http://online.wsj.com/search/search_center.html?KEYWORDS=MARC+CHAMPION&ARTICLESEARCHQUERY_PARSER=bylineAND>

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The timing of the deal is being choreographed with the schedule of U.S. President Barack Obama, who visits Turkey next week, these people say.

The Turkish and Armenian governments have agreed to terms in three areas: opening and fixing borders, restoring diplomatic relations and setting up a series of commissions to look at disputes, including one on the history of conflict between the two countries, according to the diplomats, all of whom declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the talks.

There is strong opposition to a deal in both countries, as well as in Armenia's neighbor Azerbaijan. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 to protest Armenia's occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave in Azerbaijan, following a bloody war. That conflict remains unresolved.

But a deal is seen in Western capitals as a major potential success that could help to open up and stabilize an increasingly important transit corridor for oil and gas. The region is studded with unsettled conflicts and hostile borders, and saw war between Russia and Georgia last August.

Normalizing relations between Turkey and Armenia would "create a new and positive dynamic" in relations across the region, "as well as in developing the economic and transport links we have been pursuing ever since the collapse of the former Soviet Union," said U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew J. Bryza, the State Department's point man in the Caucasus.

Mr. Bryza travels to Azerbaijan Thursday to discuss how a Turkish-Armenian agreement could help revive efforts to secure a settlement on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Announcement of a Turkish-Armenian pact has also become caught up in Mr. Obama's campaign promise to support a Congressional resolution that would recognize as genocide the Ottoman Empire's 1915 killing of up to 1.5 million Armenians in what is now central and eastern Turkey. Turkey fiercely denies the killings were genocide. The White House traditionally makes a statement to mark Armenian Remembrance Day on April 24.

Analysts say Turkey's government hopes progress in reviving its relations with Armenia could prompt the White House not to recognize the killings as genocide and to block the Congressional resolution -- something previous U.S. presidents have done.

That gives the U.S. leverage to press Turkey into an agreement with Armenia, diplomats say, but only so long as the U.S. doesn't recognize the genocide.

If the U.S. proceeds with the genocide resolution, "the most important damage would be to Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia," said Özgür Ünlühisarcikli, director of the Ankara office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a think tank.

"I cannot imagine any Turkish government opening the Armenian border just after the U.S. Congress or the U.S. president has acknowledged the genocide," he said.

Recognition of the 1915 killings as genocide is a touchstone issue for the Armenian community in the U.S. -- some 385,000 people according to the 2000 census and several times that by some estimates. Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week grilled Philip Gordon, Mr. Obama's pick for assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs, over articles he had written while at a think tank. In them, he emphasized the damage that recognizing the genocide would do to U.S. relations with Turkey.

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One date under discussion for signing the deal with Armenia, diplomats say, is April 16, between Mr. Obama's visit to Turkey and the expected April 24 Armenia statement. The process of reopening borders and restoring diplomatic relations is expected to take weeks or months, diplomats say.

Senior officials on both sides declined to comment on the status of the talks, a sign of the sensitivity of the issue.

The attempt at Turkish-Armenian rapprochement has sparked strident opposition. Some Armenians worry a deal could derail pressure for the U.S. to recognize the 1915 killing of Armenians as genocide. Azerbaijan is concerned reopening border could reduce pressure for Armenia to make concessions needed for a settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkish nationalists oppose what they see as a betrayal of fellow Muslim and Turkic Azerbaijan.

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Defense officials said the Israel Navy would allocate at least one missile ship to participate in a search-and-rescue exercise in the Mediterranean Sea in July. Other NATO member countries are expected to join the drill.

The Israeli and Turkish navies have enjoyed years of strong ties and participate annually in joint maneuvers throughout the region.

While there was never a real fear that this year's exercise would be canceled, the possibility was raised due to the strained relations between Turkey and Israel since Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan castigated Israel during Operation Cast Lead, defense officials said.

OC Ground Forces Command Maj.-Gen. Avi Mizrahi also raised Ankara's ire in February when he told a conference of IDF officers at the National Defense College that Erdogan needed to look in the mirror before criticizing Israel.

Mizrahi said Turkey was not in a position to condemn Israeli actions in Gaza when it stations troops in northern Cyprus and massacred Armenians during World War I.

Mizrahi's comments followed Erdogan's harsh criticism of Israel at the World Economic Forum in Davos during a panel with President Shimon Peres.

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